

CLAIMS:

1. A gaming system including a system controller, a credit establishment means, a plurality of gaming machines, and a communications system connecting each of the plurality of gaming machines to the system controller, the gaming machines each
5 having credit recording means, a player input device, a tracking input device and a game controller, each game controller being arranged to play a game when a player has established a credit in the credit recording means of the respective gaming machine, the gaming system being characterised in that the credit establishment means is arranged to establish a player credit and to associate that credit with a player tracking means of a
10 player establishing the credit, and while a player is playing a game on a machine selected by the player from the plurality of gaming machines the credit is held in the credit recording means of the selected gaming machine, each gaming machine being responsive to the presence of a player credit held by in the credit recording means of the respective machine to lock the machine preventing play by any player unless the
15 machine is supplied via the tracking input device, with a player tracking means associated with the credit held in the credit recording means of the respective gaming machine.
2. The system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the gaming machines connected to the system includes a reservation button which when pressed while the player tracking
20 means is present causes the machine to lock and prevent further play in the absence of the respective player tracking means.
3. The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the reservation button, when pressed while the player tracking means is present, causes the machine to lock only when the players credit is non-zero.
- 25 4. The system as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein the gaming machines connected to the system include a timeout means such that when the machine is locked for more than a predetermined time any credit held in the credit recording means of the machine is transferred to the gaming system controller and held there for the player and the machine is unlocked to allow another player to establish a credit in the credit
30 recording means of the machine and commence play.
5. The system as claimed in claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein the player credit established by the credit establishment means and associated with a player tracking means of a player establishing the credit is held in the credit recording means of the machine on which the player is playing.

6. The system as claimed in claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein the player credit established by the credit establishment means and associated with a player tracking means of a player establishing the credit is held in the system controller.

7. The system as claimed in claim 6, wherein the gaming machines connected to the system include credit importing means such that when a player tracking means is supplied to a gaming machine that is not currently holding a player credit in its credit recording means and is unlocked, the gaming machine will signal the system controller to transfer the players credit of the player supplying the player tracking means to the credit recording means of the respective gaming machine.

8. The system/gaming machine/player tracking means as claimed in claim 7, wherein the player credit held in the system controller is transferred to the credit recording means of the machine selected by the player when the player inserts the associated player tracking means into the tracking input device of the selected machine.

9. The system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the player tracking means is a token.

10. The system as claimed in claim 9, wherein the token is a magnetic stripe card.

11. The system as claimed in claim 9, wherein the token is a smart card.

12. The system as claimed in claim 9, wherein token is issued by the gaming establishment as an in-house identification mechanism.

13. The system as claimed in claim 9, wherein token is a financial transaction card issued by a remote financial institution.

14. The system as claimed in claim 9, wherein the token is a ticket printed by the gaming establishment operating the system and readable by a bill acceptor mounted within the gaming machine.

15. The system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein tracking input device is a bio-sensor input device and the player tracking means is a physical attribute of the player.

16. The system as claimed in claim 15, wherein the tracking input device is a fingerprint reader and the player tracking means is a fingerprint of the player.

17. The system as claimed in claim 15, wherein the tracking input device is an iris scanner and the player tracking means is an eye of the player.

18. A gaming machine connected to a gaming system wherein the gaming system comprises a system controller, a credit establishment means, a plurality of said gaming machines, and a communications system connecting each of the plurality of gaming machines to the system controller, the gaming machine having credit recording means, a player input device, a tracking input device and a game controller, the game

controller being arranged to play a game when a player has established a credit in the credit recording means of the gaming machine, the gaming machine being characterised in that the credit establishment means is arranged to establish a player credit and to associate that credit with a player tracking means of a player establishing the credit, and while a player is playing a game on the gaming machine the credit is held in the credit recording means of the gaming machine, and the gaming machine being responsive to the presence of a player credit held in the credit recording means to lock the gaming machine preventing play by any player unless a player tracking means is supplied to the machine via the tracking input device, whereby the machine identifies the player tracking means as being associated with the credit held in the credit recording means of the gaming machine.

19. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 18, wherein the gaming machines connected to the system includes a reservation button which when pressed while the player tracking means is present causes the machine to lock and prevent further play in the absence of the respective player tracking means.

20. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 19, wherein the reservation button, when pressed while the player tracking means is present, causes the machine to lock only when the players credit is non-zero.

21. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 18, 19 or 20 wherein the player credit established by the credit establishment means and associated with a player tracking means of a player establishing the credit is held in the credit recording means of the machine on which the player is playing.

22. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 18, 19, 20 or 21, wherein the player credit established by the credit establishment means and associated with a player tracking means of a player establishing the credit is held in the system controller.

23. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 22, wherein the gaming machines connected to the system include credit importing means such that when a player tracking means is supplied to a gaming machine that is not currently holding a player credit in its credit recording means and is unlocked, the gaming machine will signal the system controller to transfer the players credit of the player supplying the player tracking means to the credit recording means of the respective gaming machine.

24. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 23, wherein the player credit held in the system controller is transferred to the credit recording means of the machine selected by the player when the player inserts the associated player tracking means into the tracking input device of the selected machine.

25. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 or 23, wherein the player tracking means is a token.
26. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 25, wherein the token is a magnetic stripe card.
- 5 27. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 25, wherein the token is a smart card.
28. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 25, wherein token is issued by the gaming establishment as an in-house identification mechanism.
29. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 25, wherein token is a financial transaction card issued by a remote financial institution.
- 10 30. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 25, wherein the token is a ticket printed by the gaming establishment operating the gaming machine and readable by a bill acceptor mounted within the gaming machine.
31. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 or 23, wherein tracking input device is a bio-sensor input device and the player tracking means is a
15 physical attribute of the player.
32. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 31, wherein the tracking input device is a fingerprint reader and the player tracking means is a fingerprint of the player.
33. The gaming machine as claimed in claim 31, wherein the tracking input device is an iris scanner and the player tracking means is an eye of the player.
- 20 34. A player tracking means associated with a player, when used with a gaming system including system controller, a credit establishment means, a plurality of gaming machines, and a communications system connecting each of the plurality of gaming machines to the system controller, the gaming machines each having credit recording means, a player input device, a tracking input device and a game controller, each game
25 controller being arranged to play a game when a player has established a credit in the credit recording means of the respective gaming machine, the gaming system being characterised in that the credit establishment means is arranged to establish a player credit of the player and to associate that credit with the player tracking means, and while the player is playing a game on the gaming machine the credit is held in the
30 credit recording means of a gaming machine selected by the player from the plurality of gaming machines, the selected gaming machine being responsive to the presence of a player credit held in the credit recording means of the respective machine to lock the machine preventing play by any player unless the machine is supplied via the tracking input device, with the player tracking means associated with the credit held in the credit
35 recording means of the selected gaming machine.

35. The player tracking means as claimed in claim 34, wherein the player tracking means is a token.
26. The player tracking means as claimed in claim 35, wherein the token is a magnetic stripe card.
- 5 37. The tracking means as claimed in claim 35, wherein the token is a smart card.
38. The tracking means as claimed in claim 35, wherein token is issued by the gaming establishment as an in-house identification mechanism.
39. The tracking means as claimed in claim 35, wherein token is a financial transaction card issued by a remote financial institution.
- 10 40. The tracking means as claimed in claim 35, wherein the token is a ticket printed by the gaming establishment and readable by a bill acceptor mounted within the gaming machine.
41. The tracking means claimed in claim 34, wherein tracking input device is a bio-sensor input device and the player tracking means is a physical attribute of the player.
- 15 42. The tracking means as claimed in claim 41, wherein the tracking input device is a fingerprint reader and the player tracking means is a fingerprint of the player.
43. The tracking means as claimed in claim 41, wherein the tracking input device is an iris scanner and the player tracking means is an eye of the player.